



Anna L., Resident



## AgeSong Institute Internship Program

Stephanie C., Intern



Elizabeth S., Nader's and Elke's Mom

Nile B., Resident

*Why this? Why you?* Is it because you are somehow connected to all the acts of care and caring that have ever happened? Is it because there is in each human creature a feeling, a sensing, an energy called conscience (knowing-with: but with what, where, whence). Is it because in your own life encounters and the influence of your family and your society added to your own moments - somehow?

- DR. RICHARD W. WISEMAN

Founding Honorary Chair, Pacific Institute

# The AgeSong Institute Family Support Program

AgeSong Institute and AgeSong staff are here to support elders to live in a caring, loving and inspiring environment that reflects the true value of who elders are. We would like to provide a home that feeds body, mind and spirit. Standards are high at AgeSong. When it comes to caring for our elders, we ask for a deep and loving care from our interns and staff. Because we know that working with elders can involve traversing challenging new territories, we often refer to our interns as *Warriors of the Heart* and/or *Midwives of the Soul*. These are terms used by the poet and writer Paolo Coehlo.

AgeSong staff and AgeSong Institute interns work with premier health care systems throughout California to support transitional care services for older adults in need of residential milieu support before they return home. AgeSong Institute interns play a vital role in ensuring the success of this program.

We know that being an elder brings with it many gifts and lessons of life that only those with much life-experience can offer. Elders are our teachers and mentors, our leaders and guides. If we deeply listen to them with all of our senses as well as our heart and soul, we gain much wisdom and understanding for our own journey through life.

*Meditators and therapists, take a stance in the world. Make your detachment useful. Use your spiritual, psychological, cultural and educational powers wisely. If you have privilege in these areas, use it in the real world, don't just keep it to yourself.*

- DR. ARNOLD MINDELL

Founder of Processwork

## Who are Interns?

With backgrounds in psychology, gerontology, counseling, grief and loss support, and/or human development, interns come from a variety of schools and universities in the Bay Area and beyond. We select interns who show an authentic interest and passion to work with the aging population, and with an interest in being part of a movement that views aging with respect and awareness. This is a view that looks at the gift of years that aging or maturing affords us.

The AgeSong Institute teaches a humanistic-existential, process oriented approach to working with individuals in general and elders specifically. This approach refrains from pathologizing and labeling and tries to understand the appearance of symptoms as important messages to be explored and understood. In such a phenomenological approach, symptoms are understood as solutions to whatever ails or burdens a resident rather than a problem to be eliminated.

Each intern is supervised by a licensed professional and required to attend trainings and group supervision sessions weekly. Many of our past interns, following a year-long internship program, have returned licensed and re-joined our team. Others stay in touch from afar keeping us abreast of the work in which they are engaged.



Amy S., Intern, and Mary M., Resident

## What Do Interns Do?

All residents have an opportunity to connect with interns who, if they so desire, provide emotional and therapeutic support individually and/or in group settings.

Interns spend two or more days a week in an AgeSong community and may accompany residents to group programs, share stories while on walks, connect in a painting class, listen to music, and read poetry together. They also plan trips to the opera or share in a quiet moment. Groups focus on meditation, expressive arts, movement, humor, national and international news, literature, travel and much more. Our interns follow the lead of elders; they show us what is important to them.

Interns support the community should a crisis arise, if a fall occurs or when residents become ill. Individual counseling and support groups are provided as requested for residents and families, as well as training and support for caregivers and staff. Families and friends are invited to be a part of our community and to be as active as they choose to be. Interns may be in contact with families and friends to pass along information, to set up meetings when beneficial, to gather history or valuable information, or to invite families and friends to events and programs.



Steve P.,  
Assistant Clinical Director

Ruth D., Resident

# Family Support Sessions

From time to time, AgeSong facilitates family support sessions and groups designed to provide education, resources, information, and most importantly, support to family members of the residents. Moving a family member to a senior housing environment can bring up many emotions and concerns and can be overwhelming and time consuming. All too often families are left with an internal flood of feelings with no place to express them.

AgeSong encourages family members to take advantage of these individual sessions or groups, and may contact the community to schedule these meetings or to sign up for up-coming groups.

Family sessions follow the needs of the family members providing positive regard, empathy, and honest, open discussions.

Individual sessions or groups focus on resources relating to resident issues such as transition, forgetfulness, behavioral challenges and medical changes; they also provide information about our communities and offer a confidential environment to share experiences.



*Now we are old enough and maybe even wise enough to decide how we'd like to live before we die.  
And maybe we even have the guts to make the choices we need to make to do it in style.*

- DR. ELIZABETH BUGENTAL

Author of *AgeSong* and *Paradoxes of Our Final Years*



Sushi F., Staff

Grace M., Resident

*A big thank you to the residents, families, interns, staff, volunteers and our community supporters for the trust and confidence you have given us for over a decade. Please know the learning that takes place in AgeSong communities is carried far and wide, and lasts a lifetime. It takes all of us to continue our tradition to be Warriors of the Heart and Midwives of the Soul.*



2009-2010 San Francisco site Intern graduation

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